STI BULLETIN

A publication for users of the NASA scientific and technical information program

RECONplus Completes Alpha Test Phase

The RECONplus project recently completed alpha testing for the character-based and command line interfaces. This follows approximately 11 weeks of testing by 28 searchers from 14 NASA center libraries and affiliates, one NASA Technology Transfer Center and the NASA Center for AeroSpace Information. The alpha testers spent over 350 hours testing the system to identify problems and suggestions for improvement.

Responses were collected throughout the alpha test period. This allowed the RECONplus development team to begin modifications to the software and database structure almost immediately. The changes fell into two categories—changes that span the entire system and changes specific to each interface.

Evaluation Prompts System-Wide Changes

Changes that span the entire system include the redesign of default display formats so that they are compact yet readable. Header information is provided so that information of most importance for document identification and ordering is located at the beginning of each display. In addition, the indexes to the databases were changed to provide a separate Report Status index that allows searching on final, interim, and quarterly reports. A new index of the expanded Subject Category Code was created. The results of a search can be sorted by the expanded version of the coded value.

The system also uses a BASISplus function called "term switching," which allows a field to be searched with a coded or expanded (uncoded) value. For example, if you are interested in documents only in German, you can search on "Germany" or on "GR," the Internal Standards Organization (ISO) language code equivalent. Similar functionality will be provided for document type and media type fields.

Interface Improvements Feature Speed, Easy Access

Changes were also made to each interface. The character-based interface was modified to include more direct navigation between screens and functions, therefore requiring

Electronic Access for STI Program Publications

Like any organization, NASA is constantly re-evaluating program budgets, and the NASA STI program's budget is no exception. Recently, reproduction and distribution costs were reviewed for *Aerospace Medicine and Biology, Aeronautical Engineering,* and *NASA Patent Abstracts.* These continuing bibliographies were created as announcement tools for newly added citations to the NASA STI Database. Recent advances in electronic access now provide quicker and more cost effective means of announcement. Beginning in 1996, we plan to provide *AeroMed, AeroEng,* and *Patents* only electronically, using the World Wide Web at no cost to our users. The cumulative indexes for these bibliographies will be discontinued after the 1995 publication (calendar) year. Alternative search and retrieval mechanisms are available via the NASA STI Database through RECON, CASI TRS and RECONplus. We plan to provide executable searches that will retrieve the information in these subject areas by user-supplied date ranges.

NASA Patent Abstracts Bibliography Now Online

In an effort to move quickly toward this new environment, the latest issue of *NASA Patent*

In This Issue

Online Citations Pass 2-Million Mark

World Wide Web (WWW) access to the STI Database via the NASA Center for AeroSpace Information Technical Report Server (CASI TRS) now offers greatly expanded coverage. The number of citations and abstracts referencing NASA technical reports, journal articles and conference papers available for browsing on the CASI TRS passed the 2-million mark in July 1995 with the addition of records dating from 1962 to 1969. Records covering 1970 to the present had been available previously. Current records continue to be added to the database weekly. In addition to these older NASA reports, citations for documents of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), NASA's predecessor, covering the years 1915 to 1960, have now been loaded. CASI TRS can be accessed free of charge along with several other NASA STI online products and services through the NASA STI home page. The Universal Resource Locator (URL) for the NASA STI home page is

http://www.sti.nasa.gov/STI-homepage.html.

The NASA Technical Report Server (NTRS) home page is a popular means of accessing the CASI TRS as well as several other NASA technical report servers. The URL for this homepage is

http://techreports.larc.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/NTRS.

Some users of the NTRS report problems displaying citations and abstracts from the CASI TRS after obtaining their list of search results. Often this problem results because the user is connecting to the NTRS from a site that has a firewall or proxy. Firewalls can tend to break the very long URLs used on the WWW, resulting in an error message. Technicians are looking into possible solutions to this problem. Meanwhile, connecting directly to the CASI TRS may bypass this type of firewall problem in some instances. The URL for direct access to the CASI TRS is

http://www.sti.nasa.gov/casitrs.html.

Gopher access to the CASI TRS is also available, although gopher does not offer field search capabilities. From a Web browser (Netscape, Mosaic, etc.), use this URL:

gopher://gopher.sti.nasa.gov.

Each of the home pages listed above has a "Comments" page where users can communicate problems, questions and ideas about NASA's online services. NASA STI staff appreciate user comments and will respond to all messages. ◄

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fewer keystrokes. The command line interface was also integrated with the character-based interface, allowing the searcher to switch between the three search modes. Quick Search provides single screen access to the most frequently used fields: author, report number, publication date, and subject terms. The Full Search mode provides menu-based access to all indexed fields. The RECONplus Command Line uses minimal syntax in a shorthand that can be used to create more complex searches.

Command Line Interface

The major modifications following alpha testing were made to the command line interface. Using the BASISplus interface development tool AMIABLE, from Technology Concepts and Design, Inc. (TCDI), the RECONplus team developed a command line that significantly reduces the number of keystrokes required to perform a search. The default command is a search on the basic index, which includes abstract, title, and subject/thesaurus terms as individual

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words. To search the default index, the user need only enter the search term and press ENTER. A more complex search involves the selection of a specific index from a pull-down menu and the connection of multiple terms within the same index or from different indexes using standard Boolean operators, AND, OR and NOT. RECONplus also provides range searching for numeric and date fields, and the NULL operator, which allows the user to search for records that do not contain data in the field specified.

In addition to the aspects of the system that the alpha testers asked to have changed, there were several aspects of the system that the users identified as advancements over the current RECON system:

- The ability to search nine high-level indexes and over 60 specifically indexed fields.

- Building complex searches without combining search sets.

- The NULL operator, which allows the user to search for records that do not contain data in a specific field. For example, the searcher can exclude records from the result set that do not contain abstracts.

- Sort capabilities on any indexed field.

The next step for the new system is the beta testing of the character-based and command line interfaces. The testing will begin in mid-August and extend through September. A graphical user interface (GUI) is under development and will start alpha testing with NASA center libraries in a few months. ◀

Foreign Literature Translation Service

If you find yourself awash in a flood of potentially useful foreign language documents, the Foreign Literature Translation Service (FLTS) at the NASA Center for AeroSpace Information (CASI) offers the foreign language document assistance you need. CASI offers translation services to any government agency or government contractor at a variety of delivery rates to meet the varying needs of our customers.

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Abstracts Bibliography, Section 1, Abstracts is available via the Internet through the World Wide Web on the NASA STI program's home page at **http://www.sti.nasa.gov**. The *Patents* bibliography is available in a portable document format (PDF) and is viewable using Adobe Systems Inc.'s Acrobat Reader. It may be viewed on screen or printed at your locally-attached printer. Adobe Acrobat Readers are freely available via Adobe's home page **http://www.adobe.com/** and are easily downloaded and installed. Over the next several months, *AeroMed* and *AeroEng* will become available in the same way. We feel that the increased speed and round-the-clock access to these bibliographies will mitigate the impact of discontinuing the hard copy distribution. We hope that our users will not be inconvenienced by these changes and will look on them rather as enhancements.

Please feel free to contact our NASA Access Help Desk at (301) 621-0390 or via e-mail at **help@sti.nasa.gov** for assistance and/or to provide feedback. As is being done elsewhere in the private and public sectors, we too are moving toward a new world of information delivery, a movement that is being hastened by budget considerations. ◀

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NASA

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
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RECON Training Schedule

Monday, September 11, 1995
Monday, October 2, 1995

RECON users, keep this in mind: when RECONplus is up
and running, most users will need additional training.